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MEMORANDUM

TO: House Education Committee
FROM: Krista Huling, Chair, State Board of Education
SUBJECT: Testimony on House 19-1195. An act related to the closing of post-secondary schools
DATE: March 1, 2019

Thank you for inviting the State Board of Education to give feedback on DR 19-1195. In full disclosure, I am here representing the Board, but our full Board has not had a discussion on this piece of legislation in its current draft. However, the State Board did discuss the closing of Green Mountain College* and the challenges facing small independent secondary schools on February 20, 2019.

Commendations:

- In the face of the challenges of the closing of Burlington College and the challenges facing small independent post-secondary institutions like Green Mountain College, the State Board agrees with the intent of this bill to ensure proper record retention for current and past students.

Recommendations:

- The Board shares the same concerns with the AOE, that the trigger for notification should be more than just “financial.” When granting approval to an independent school, the board grants approval on a “conditional on the requirement that the school reports to the Agency of Education within five business days whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing or administration during the approval period.” While this list may not transfer perfectly to post-secondary, it is reflective of situations that have occurred in the past that have caused concern.
- This is a reactive bill to one piece of a larger problem-- the viability of small post-secondary institutions in the state of Vermont. These schools are critical to Vermont’s educational and economic landscape. The State Board would advocate for a more proactive bill that aims at making sure all Vermont higher learning institutions are sustainable and ready to remain open in the midst of declining enrollment.

Considerations:

- The State Board of Education under Act 98 is charged to “establish and advance education policy for the state of Vermont.” Deciding who gets to maintain records is not policy making but is a more administrative function that may be best done by the Agency of Education.

*Representatives from Green Mountain College were Robert Allen, President and Thomas Mauhs-Pugh, Provost and V.P. of Academic Affairs

https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-state-board-final-draft-minutes-02_20_19.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM2tT4MTNaA> start at roughly 5 hours and 40 minutes